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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000722

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/SPG

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/22/2016

TAGS: PGOV KPKO PHUM PREL AU UN SU

SUBJECT: WEST DARFUR: WALI AND CHARGE DISCUSS SECURITY,
AMIS/UNMIS REHAT

REF: A. KHARTOUM 670

¶B. KHARTOUM 67

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Andrew Steinfeld; Reason: 1.4(b)
and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: UN intervention in Darfur would be a "disaster," West Darfur Governor Gaffar Abdel Hakam told Charge Steinfeld during a March 20-21 visit to El Geneina. The state was "very secure," despite recent drawdowns by many NGOs in the area, and Government efforts at tribal reconciliation were making progress. There was simply no need for military intervention, he insisted, and the people are "firmly against it" -- at least while Gaffar is in charge. END SUMMARY.

West Darfur Wali: Intervention Would be a "Disaster"

¶2. (C) UN military intervention in Darfur would be a "disaster," and "would make the situation even worse," West Darfur Governor Gaffar Abdel Hakam told Charge Steinfeld on March 20 in the state capital, El Geneina. "I have been touring all over the state with no fear," said Gaffar, sporting thick, black-framed glasses, a safari suit, faux leopard skin slippers, and a large walking stick. "Visitors here will find they are very secure," he assured the Charge, without mentioning the UN's January decision to withdraw essential staff from the northern half of the state (Ref B). (Note: USAID has also evacuated its staff from El Geneina, and recently closed its office in the city.) Though he admitted that internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the area were only getting about 50 percent of what they needed, particularly in terms of water, there had been "many reconciliations between tribes," and the Governor (wali) planned to continue this process by holding conferences with tribal leaders. "There are no problems here," he insisted, "except in Kulbus" -- headquarters of the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), in northern West Darfur.

Roads are "Accessible;" Border is "Quiet"

¶3. (C) Gaffar said the Government abided by the ceasefire agreement it had made at N'Djamena in 2004, though the rebels had violated it several times. In the past, they had "even stopped civilians on the roads," though he declared that all roads in the state were now "accessible and open to everybody." Similarly, though there had been "some instability on the border" with Chad last year, things were now "quiet," he said definitively.

¶4. (C) The Governor said he was pleased with the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) peacekeeping forces in West Darfur, and hoped their mission would continue. "We have no

need for military intervention by international forces, and our people are firmly against international intervention." However, he remained open to the possibility of a UN force to help implement an agreement made by negotiators at Abuja -- something he hoped, and expected, to happen within the next six months.

¶ 15. (C) The Charge responded that he too hoped the parties in Abuja would reach an agreement soon, but said that it was the position of the United States that a UN force should replace AMIS at the end of its mandate. He also asked the Governor about the West Darfur Humanitarian Affairs Commissioner's recent move to shut down the Sudan Social Development Organization's (SUDO) operations in the state (Ref A); Post will report on the Governor's response in septel.

Comment/Bio Note: Speak Loudly and Carry a Big Stick

¶ 16. (C) The Governor is not the type of leader who responds well to questions. He seemed to become more irritable as the meeting wore on, just as his interpreter became more nervous and quiet with each exchange. His staff -- who seemed equally nervous their Embassy guests might be a few minutes late for their meeting -- likely have good reason to fear him. A school teacher by training, he joined the National Islamic Front in 1989, and served as Commissioner of Wadi Salih, in the southwestern part of the state; some allege he is responsible for large scale massacres of Fur villagers by government militias in the area in the early 1990s. The fact that Gaffar is Fur himself has made him only more despised by his tribe, according to Embassy sources, and added to his reputation as a pro-Khartoum hardliner.

¶ 17. (C) For its part, the Government has rewarded Gaffar for

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his loyalty. He served as Commissioner of El Geneina in the late 1990s, and later as Minister of Health for West Darfur; he was promoted to Governor under the Government of National Unity in October 2005. As one UN official in El Geneina noted, the change in the state government was almost immediate. "We used to have meetings with the old Wali all the time. We've had one with the new one: He called us altogether, I asked a question about security, and then he slammed his notebook shut and said the meeting was over. We haven't seen him since then." The Governor might not be afraid anyone, but he clearly does not like answering questions -- especially from foreigners.

STEINFELD